

**EQUALITY COMMISSION
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
Public Authority Progress Report 2003 - 2004**

**Template to assist Public Authorities to report on
implementation of the equality and good relations duties under
Section 75 of the NI Act 1998**

The information required from public authorities will be based on the period from **1 April 2003 to 31 March 2004**. Please ensure that it is submitted to the Commission by **31 August 2004**, electronically (by completing this template) and in writing, with a signed cover letter from the Chief Executive or, in his/her absence, the Deputy Chief Executive.

This year's progress report template builds upon earlier guidance, for purposes of consistency and comparison.

Please report on progress by entering information at the end of each Section in the template. Prompts are included under each Section to help you to assess the extent to which progress has been made within each area. Please note that these prompts are neither prescriptive nor inclusive. It is important that the authority reports on what it views as being relevant in terms of progress being made on implementation of the statutory duties.

Name of public authority (Enter details below)

Department of the Environment

Equality Officer name and contact details (Enter details below)

**Alex Boyle, Equality Unit, Central Management Branch,
Clarence Court, 10–18 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8GB**

Tel: 028 90 541194

Textphone: 028 90 540642

Fax: 028 90 541169

Email :alex.boyle@doeni.gov.uk

Section 1: Strategic Implementation of the Section 75 Duties

Please enter specific progress on implementation of the good relations duty under Section 10 of this template.

• Outline evidence of progress made in developing/meeting equality and good relations objectives, performance indicators and targets and inclusion of these in corporate and annual operating plans. Your response should include any targets for 2004-2005.

The Corporate Plan for the years 2003 to 2006 reiterated the Department's commitment to ensuring that equality of opportunity and good relations were at the forefront of all its policies and operational programmes.

Within the Department's Business Plan 2003-04, Corporate Services Division was committed to monitoring the operation of the Department's Equality Scheme and overseeing the planned programme of Equality Impact Assessments.

Within the business plans of divisions and agencies, screening & Equality Impact Assessment are treated as integral parts of the taking forward of the relevant policies and operational programmes.

Equality objectives and associated performance indicators are included in the forward job plans of policy-making staff. These are reviewed on a regular basis.

• Outline steps taken to work with other public authorities in progressing the duties.

The Director of Corporate Services, a member of the Senior Civil Service, is the Departmental representative at the Interdepartmental Equality and Social Needs Steering Group (ESNSG) meetings, chaired by OFMDFM.

An Equality Unit representative regularly attends the Interdepartmental Equality Practitioners Group meetings organized by the Statutory Duty and Human Rights Unit, OFMDFM. These meetings are used as a forum to discuss issues of best practice and share expertise and learning.

The Department's Equality Officer is a member of the joint Government, and voluntary & community sector working group, looking at the review of public consultation procedures.

The Department shares a Principal Statistician with the Department for Regional Development and maintains a close relationship with that Department in developing Section 75 issues. The Principal Statistician is a member of the Equality and Social Need Research and Information Group (ESNRIG), a sub-group of ESNSG. The Group is made up of officials from NI departments and NIO, along with representatives from the NI Equality Commission and NI Council for Voluntary Action. This group considers the research and data requirements of Section 75.

The Department, through its Local Government Division, offers advice to district councils and both its NDPBs – the Local Government Staff Commission and the Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee.

The Department's Road Safety and Vehicle Standards Division has been working with DHSS&PS to consider the impact of the proposed Children's Traffic Club against Section 75 criteria and will undertake any action necessary to address equality implications prior to the launch of the scheme.

The Planning Service seeks views on emerging planning policy by engaging with other Government bodies and interest groups in the preparation of policy and guidance.

• Outline any details of partnership work developed or further progressed with the voluntary and/or community sector as a consequence of Section 75 work.

The Department's Equality Officer is a member of the Joint Government Voluntary and Community Sector Forum. This provides a valuable opportunity for discussion on specific Section 75 issues. The Equality Officer also represents the Department on the Social Economy Forum, and the Disability and Children and Young People inter-departmental groups.

During 2003/04, representatives from all of the Section 75 groups were again invited to meet the Department's Equality Working Group (EWG). EWG is made up of representatives from the Departments agencies and divisions, and meets quarterly to review progress and share good practice on fulfilling the commitments set out in the Department's Equality Scheme. Agenda items for the meeting included an EQIA Programme update, review of consultation procedures, accessibility of information and services and training. It was agreed by those in attendance that the joint Section 75/EWG meetings continue to be a useful forum to discuss issues of mutual concern and develop good working relationships between the Department and the voluntary and community sector. A further meeting will be arranged in September 2004.

Section 75 groups provided advice and comments on the Department's draft Guide to Making Information Accessible.

The Department, through the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Northern Ireland (DVLNI), has a statutory duty to ensure that all licence holders are fit to drive. As a consequence of the EQIA *Procedures used to assess medical fitness to drive*, where the Occupational Health Centre recommends that applicants undertake a driving assessment, DVLNI now refers the applicant to the Mobility Centre of Disability Action, which carries out the driving assessments and notifies the agency of the outcome.

The Planning Service has been actively involved in trying to facilitate and assist local communities to participate effectively and efficiently in the Development Plan process – in particular consultation on Area Development Plans. The agency engaged Community Technical Aid to support the preparation of five sub-regional Development Plans. The benefits of this consultation at a local scale have been recognized and are outlined in Section 9 below.

To enhance the process of policy development, and supplement the four-month consultation period, the Planning Policy Section has formed working groups for each Planning Policy Statement (PPS) and Development Control Advice Note (DCAN) project. These are made up of the key stakeholders, depending on the topic of the project, and may include other departments, agencies, outside organizations and Section 75 groups.

Until this year, the Planning Service has tended to engage with key stakeholders on an informal basis, however, this has now been integrated into the formal process of policy formulation and review. In producing draft DCAN 11 *Access for All*, the Planning Service liaised closely with the Built Environment Advisory Forum (BEAF) established by the Commission. This enhanced the process of developing the policy guidance document and equality screening process.

The Department is committed to the values and aims contained in the Executive's Victims Strategy, and, where appropriate, consults victims groups about major policy proposals.

The Driver and Vehicle Testing Agency (DVTA) contacted 385 organisations, including other departments, district councils, other public authorities, Section 75 groups, and individuals inviting them to participate in the informal stage of consultation for the vehicle test and driver test EQIAs. Informal meetings were arranged with a number of respondents.

• Indicate if Section 75 is a standard agenda item for Board and/or Senior Management Team on a quarterly basis.

Progress reports on equality, human rights and New Targeting Social Need commitments, including those under Section 75, are a standing item on the agenda of the Departmental Board, which meets monthly. Membership comprises the Permanent Secretary, the two Deputy Secretaries, the Chief Executives of the Planning and Environment and Heritage Services, and the Director of Corporate Services.

• Please provide details of the direct resourcing of Section 75 work during 2003–4. This should include staff appointed/directed (not names) to specifically advance work on equality scheme delivery, and details of any budget allocation to specifically deliver equality scheme commitments.

The Department's Equality Unit is now fully staffed. It comprises a full-time Deputy Principal and Staff Officer, overseen by a Grade 7 (who is also responsible for the Central Management Branch) and the Director of Corporate Services (Senior Civil Service). The Unit is responsible for ensuring the commitments contained in the Department's Equality Scheme are implemented, and providing guidance to business areas on Section 75 and EQIA issues.

During the period of the report the Department spent £30,674. on internal statistician resources.

DVTA employed a seconded member of staff from the NI Assembly specifically to take forward work on EQIAs.

• Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of Strategic Implementation during the period.

Enhancing Factors

The Department's Equality Unit provided advice to agencies and divisions and liaised as necessary with other Government departments and bodies.

Responsibility for Section 75 issues has been agreed and clearly designated within all parts of the Department, with individual officers in each Agency and

Division assigned responsibility for equality matters. Each represents his or her particular business area on EWG.

Quarterly meetings of EWG have ensured consistency of approach and sharing of good practice across the Department.

Quarterly progress reports to the Minister and senior officers provide a useful means of focusing attention and charting progress on Section 75 issues.

Impeding Factors

There was some slippage in the EQIA programme mainly due to delay in the underlying process of policy development.

Shortage of in-house expertise has compelled some agencies to use external consultants to undertake EQIAs. Experience has indicated that the level of relevant expertise held by the consultants is limited. In order effectively to mainstream equality, the Equality Unit has asked that, if consultants need to be engaged by the Department, they should in future be used only in a supporting role, working alongside policy staff.

Section 2: Screening & Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

2a) **If a Screening Report has not yet been submitted to the Commission please advise us on the current position with regard to producing this report and forwarding to the Commission.**

At present, only screening exercises relevant to policies or legislation going out to formal consultation are placed in the public domain. Consultees are informed of screening outcomes by means of the joint EWG/Section 75 groups meetings, and the ECNI Annual Progress Report. However, within the review of consultation, the Department is considering the possible publication of periodic Screening Reports, indicating the aim of the policy, outcome of the screening exercise, and a contact number for the relevant agency or division. A list of policies screened out for equality impact assessment during 2003/04 is set out below.

2b) **If a Screening Report and EQIA Timetable has previously been submitted to the Commission please provide information on the following, in relation to new/proposed/revised policies during 2003-4:**

EQIA Timetable issued to the Commission on 25 February 2004.

Please list new/proposed/revised policies screened in or out during the period.

Planning Service

PPS 8 – Open Space, Sport and Outdoor Recreation.

PPS 17 – Control of outdoor Advertisements.

DCAN 11 (revised) - Access for all: Designing for an Accessible Environment.

DCAN 14 – Siting and Design of Radio Telecommunications Equipment.

Local Government Division

Fermanagh District Council (Best Value) (Airport Management) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

Local Government Pension Scheme (Management and Investment of Funds) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Road Safety and Vehicle Standards Division

Mobile Phones and Driving.

Seat Belt Wearing for Delivery Drivers.

Motor Vehicle (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Public Service Vehicles (Conditions of Equipment, Fitness and Use) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Motor cycle Single Vehicle Approval Scheme.

Amendment to the Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999.

Amendments to PSV and C&U Regulations.

Environmental Policy Group

Transposition of Article 6 and Annex 1 of the End of Life Vehicles Directive (amendments to the draft Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003).

Code of Practice for the Aggregates Industry in Northern Ireland.

Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 (As Amended) – Fees.

Implementation of the Landfill Directive in Northern Ireland.

Implementation of European Council Directive 1999/31/EC in Northern Ireland.

Dangerous Wild Animals (Northern Ireland) Order 2004.

Proposals for the implementation of EC Regulation 1830/2003 concerning the traceability and labeling of genetically modified organisms and the traceability of food and feed products produced from genetically modified organisms. Also EC Regulation 1829/2003 on genetically modified food and feed.

Implementation of EC Regulation 1946/2003 on transboundary movements of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).

Amendment to the Smoke Control (Exempt Fireplaces) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999 – Policy Proposals.

Implementation of Council Directive 2000/76/EC on the incineration of waste.

Consolidation and Amendment of the smoke control areas (authorized fuels) regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Amendment of the Air Quality (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2003 – Policy Proposals.

Provisional Air Quality Objective for Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons in Northern Ireland.

The Assessment and Management of Environmental Noise (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2004.

The Water Framework Directive (Implementation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc) (Amendment) (NI) Regulations 2004.

Waste Management Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Driver & Vehicle Testing Agency

Goods Vehicle Testing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Motor Vehicle Testing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Goods Vehicle Testing (Amendment) (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Motor Vehicle Testing (Amendment) (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Public Service Vehicles (Licence Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) (Test Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

Goods Vehicles (Community Authorisations) (Amendment of the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order 1981) 2003.

Motor Vehicle Testing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Motor Vehicle (Driving Licence) (Amendment No.4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003.

Motor Vehicles (Approval) (Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004.

• Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of policy screening or EQIA.

Enhancing factors

The Department's Statistician and representatives from the Equality Unit meet with agencies and divisions at the outset to identify the main issues and take the process forward. Both continue to act in an advisory role for the particular agency or division throughout.

A screening template has been developed and is used by the Department's agencies and divisions to ensure consistency.

Best practice examples in screening/EQIA work are discussed at, and circulated through the various interdepartmental equality groups, eg ESNSG and Equality Practitioners, which meet on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern.

EWG meets quarterly to discuss best practice issues and developments in equality policy.

The NICS Permanent Secretary Group has convened a Subgroup on Best Practice in Policy Development. This Subgroup has produced "A Practical Guide to Policymaking", which has been circulated to policy staff throughout the Department. It contains details of an Integrated Impact Assessment tool, developed by OFMDFM to assist policymakers undertake the various impact assessment processes and provide a structured format for the presentation of their results. The Integrated Impact Assessment tool has been piloted and is being evaluated at present. Policymakers have found the Integrated Impact

Assessment template to be a useful prompt in terms of the issues that must be addressed as part of the EQIA process. There are many aspects that must be considered in policy development and the Integrated Impact Assessment ensures that during the screening process policy developers are focused on all Section 75 groups when determining whether a particular policy should be screened out.

Progress reports on the Department's EQIA Programme are included in quarterly review of progress prepared for the Minister and senior management.

Agencies and Divisions continue to be proactive, and are encouraged to consult with the Section 75 groups as early as possible in the policymaking process to discuss potential problems and address issues of concern at the earliest possible stage.

Impeding Factors

There is a lack of an unambiguous definition of "policy" that can be used for the purposes of the statutory equality duty.

Planning Service teams have encountered difficulty using the standard screening forms because they are difficult to apply to policies and proposals with a spatial dimension. Linked to this, the teams also found it difficult to determine the correct level at which to carry out screening, ie strategic, local or spatial.

Equality impact assessment procedures are confined to those policies considered likely to have "significant" implications for equality of opportunity. The statutory guidance is loose in its definition of "significant".

Gaps in available data.

Section 3: Training

- **Indicate your organisation's progress on delivery of Section 75 related training and development during the period. Please state if the training is provided within a 5-year Training Plan.**

The Department has developed a 5-year Training and Communication Plan, within which the Equality Unit determines the Department's training needs for staff requiring Equity Awareness, EQIA methodology, and consultation training on a regular basis through EWG. A representative from Training Branch is invited to each meeting of EWG to provide a regular update on progress.

- **Outline details of staff and Management Board/Committee training associated with the Section 75 duties/Equality Scheme requirements. Provide details of types of training provision (e.g. general awareness raising, specialist training on EQIA, Screening, and Consultation) and who this training was provided for.**

Each member of staff received a hard copy summary of the Equality Scheme, highlighting the main implications. The unabridged version of the Scheme is accessible to staff on the Department's intranet.

The Equity Agenda general awareness training courses that cover the Section 75 statutory requirements continue to be rolled out to staff in the middle management grades (Executive Officer II to Deputy Principal). To date, 956 staff received training, 79 during 2003/04. Since October 2001, 373 policy staff attended training courses on EQIA methodology and consultation, 10 during 2003/04. Further staff training in these areas will take place during 2004.

Equality of opportunity and anti-discrimination issues are included in the Department's induction courses for all new staff, training courses for new managers and the Management Development Programme, which is being rolled out across the Department over the 5-year period.

Deaf awareness training and training on the use of textphones is available to staff on request.

• **Please provide details of training on awareness raising (for new staff) and refresher training (for existing staff).**

All new staff to the Department, in the Executive Officer II to Deputy Principal grades, attend Equity Awareness training courses. At present, the Department does not arrange formal refresher training for existing staff. However, all examples of good practice, and developments in Section 75 issues, learned from the Inter-departmental Equality Practitioners Group are disseminated to the agencies and divisions through their EWG representatives.

• **Provide details of how affected groups have been involved in the development and/or delivery of training.**

Training is delivered using an NICS-wide call-off contract. Disability Action's Focus Consultancy are responsible for delivering the EQIA methodology and consultation courses.

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People carries out deaf awareness and textphone training for the Department on request.

Training is a standing item on the agenda of the annual meeting between EWG and representatives of the Section 75 Groups.

• **Provide a summary of any training evaluations and comments on the benefits of such training.**

Equity Awareness Training – Trainers check the understanding of participants at the end of each course. Feedback has been found to be positive. The course content is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains valid.

EQIA Methodology and Consultation – This training is delivered by way of a centralized NICS call-off contract. Those attending the course have given positive feedback. The course content is regularly reviewed to ensure that the EQIA examples used are up to date and relevant to participants. It is intended to extend the training to cover the screening process more fully.

Equity Parts 1 & 2 -

• **Provide details of arrangements to review training needs as a result of staff recruitment, promotion or reorganisation.**

All Departmental staff undertaking EQIAs undergo prior training in EQIA methodology and consultation. OFMDFM, together with Departmental Equality Units, will be reviewing corporate training arrangements during 2004.

• Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the processes of Section 75 training during the period.

Enhancing Factors

The commitment of the core Department and its agencies to staff training has been recognised through the acquisition and retention of Investors in People accreditation.

The continued focus of senior management and the EWG on Section 75 issues.

Equality training has, through continual evaluation, become more tailored to the specific needs of the Department.

The ability of the Section 75 groups to discuss training when they meet EWG.

Section 4: Communication

• Provide details of internal and external communication of the authority's commitment to the statutory duties.

A copy of the Department's Equality Scheme is available to the public on the Department's website and to all staff on the intranet.

The Corporate Plan for the years 2003 to 2006 reiterated the Department's commitment to ensuring that equality of opportunity and good relations were at the forefront of all its policies and operational programmes. Within the Department's Business Plan 2003-04, Corporate Services Division was committed to monitoring the operation of the Department's Equality Scheme and overseeing the planned programme of Equality Impact Assessments. The Corporate and Business Plans are available to the public on the Department's website and to all staff on the intranet.

The Department's consultation documents contain specific reference to Section 75 obligations. Copies of all consultation documents are passed monthly to OFMDFM for publication on the central consultation website as well as being placed on the Department's website.

The Department publishes details of final EQIAs in the press and on the website.

The joint DRD/DOE/DCAL publication *Equality Times* – a copy of which is issued to each member of staff - included an article on "Disability Etiquette" to assist staff address people with disabilities. It covered such issues as general courtesy when dealing with people with disabilities, courtesy with people with specific visible or hidden disabilities, and general staff responsibilities towards people with disabilities.

The Department's *Guide to Making Information Accessible* issued in April 2004. The document is based on draft guidance produced by OFMDFM. The *Guide* was issued to agencies and divisions as well as the Section 75 groups for comment before being finalized and placed on the Department's website. It includes guidance on how to improve the accessibility of documents when updating websites.

All staff are kept informed of Section 75 developments through articles in *Denote*, the Department's in-house magazine, and in the monthly Team Brief.

Various agencies have made reference to equality issues at customer receptions and seminars.

● **Provide details of how the authority communicates progress on delivery of the statutory duties.**

A quarterly progress report on the commitments in the Department's Equality Scheme is prepared for the Minister and Departmental Board.

The Department communicates progress on delivery of its Section 75 duties through the Section 75 Annual Review of Progress to the Equality Commission, which is also published on the Department's website.

Section 75 groups receive updates on progress on the commitments in the Department's Equality Scheme when they meet EWG.

● **Provide details of any review of communication activities to ensure effective communication on progressing the statutory duties.**

Following completion of the consultation review, the Department will be giving consideration to how it might most effectively publicise its screening documents.

A review of communication activities will be taken into account when the Department reviews its Equality Scheme in 2005.

Section 5: Data Collection & Analysis

- **Describe any systems that have been established to supplement your available statistical and qualitative research, including consideration given to using internal organisational data and external networks.**

The Department's Statistician is a member of Equality and Social Needs Research and Information Group (ESNRIG). The cross-departmental Information and Research Needs Strategy sponsored by ESNRIG sets the direction in assessing and filling gaps.

Bilateral meetings continue to be held with each agency and division, the Equality Unit and the Department's Statistician, to discuss and define data requirements for EQIAs.

Publication of the 2001 Census results has enabled updating of key statistics for equality analysis, as well as providing new datasets not previously available (eg ethnic minorities and carers).

DVLNI, DVTA and the Planning Service conduct regular customer awareness surveys. The results of each are discussed by the agency Management Board, which decides if the impact is of sufficient significance to require a change to a particular policy.

DVLNI also use MORI data to help inform policy development.

DVTA collects external data through customer surveys and focus groups. This is analysed against current and proposed policies as an integral part of the annual business and corporate planning process.

The methodology used to compile the information for equality impact assessment of the Practical Driving Test and Vehicle Tests draft EQIA was a combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis. From the information held on their database relating to the practical driver tests and vehicle tests, DVTA was able to determine information on the number of candidates who took the practical driving test, by age group, and also pass and fail statistics by gender. A breakdown of political opinion in Northern Ireland, was provided by the 2001 Local Council Elections. In 2003, the Customer Survey was amended to include questions relating to Section 75 categories. The Agency contacted 385 organisations, groups and individuals to ascertain if they wished to be involved in informal pre-consultation meetings. Individual meetings were then arranged with various groups from the following Section 75 categories - disability, race, gender, sexual orientation and age.

Focus group research is used to inform development of road safety campaigns aimed at the principal causes of road traffic casualties.

The Planning Service collects information from the key stakeholders on the relevant working groups. Planning Policy Section will, in the near future, be actively gathering qualitative data for a PPS through an exercise broadly similar to that employed for Development Plans.

For the Magherafelt Area Plan EQIA, the following data sources were used - results of the Census of Population 2001 (used to identify, at ward level, the geographical distribution for different religious communities); 2001 Local Government Election Results, and 2001 Census of Employment. The draft Area Plan had already been the subject of pre-consultation to inform an Issues Paper. Useful qualitative data for this Paper was obtained from the Section 75 Groups by Community Technical Aid.

• **Describe any systems established to monitor the future adverse impact of policies that have been equality impact assessed.**

Once an EQIA has been completed, the Equality Unit meets the Statistician and representatives from the particular business area to discuss monitoring arrangements in terms of impacts to be monitored, data sources to be used and whether any additional quantitative or qualitative analysis is necessary. Monitoring reports will be published as part of the ECNI Annual Progress Report.

DVLNI intends to conduct, over the medium term, tailored surveys and focus group research with applicants declaring a medical condition and with disabled drivers to ensure that the processes continue to afford equality of opportunity.

DVLNI proposes to set up a new working group including Disability Action tasked with ensuring the agency routinely considers the equality implications of its policies and procedures across all Section 75 categories.

• **Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of data collection and analysis during the period.**

The Equality Research and Information Website, launched in April 2004, is a new on-line resource providing information in relation to Section 75 categories. The website contains publications, data tables news items and links to other websites. It will be a valuable tool to the agencies and divisions carrying out equality impact assessments.

Section 6: Information Provision, Access to Information and Services

- **Outline what action has been taken to review and develop arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats.**

The Department has reviewed its arrangements for the provision of information in accessible formats, including the scope for improvements to public access. A new *Guide to Making Information Accessible* was issued to agencies and divisions in April 2004. The draft *Guide* was issued to the Section 75 groups for their comments before it was finalized and a number of amendments were made in light of comments received. The Guide covers issues such as identifying customer requirements, improvements to printed documents, use of alternative formats, points to be considered when convening events and meetings, translation/transcription/interpretation, and advice for those involved in developing websites.

Access to Information and Services is a standing agenda item for the joint EWG/Section 75 meetings.

A textphone number is provided on all consultation documents.

The Department is represented on the British/Irish Sign Language Partnership Group.

- **Detail steps taken to audit/improve arrangements to make affected groups more aware of information disseminated by the authority and the services it provides.**

The Department's Equality Scheme, (which on approval was copied to a wide range of Section 75 representatives), is available on the Department's website. It contains a comprehensive description of all the Department's functions and services.

Consultation lists continue to be reviewed and are updated on a regular basis. Details of all consultations are published on the Department's website and OFMDFM consultation website.

Awareness of information services continues to be developed in all contacts with Section 75 groups and was discussed at the latest meeting between EWG and the Section 75 groups.

The Department's Road Safety Education Officers regularly visit schools for children with special needs and appropriate road safety teaching material is provided. Road Safety literature emphasises that, where further needs exist, the local Road Safety Education Office should be contacted for assistance.

• **Describe any arrangements to develop monitoring systems regarding access to information and services to ensure equality of opportunity.**

Formal monitoring arrangements are included within the Department's Strategy.

The Department will conduct periodic evaluations of its *Guide to Making Information Accessible* in order to assess its effectiveness. The document will be amended and updated following review.

Information provision and access to information will continue to be included as an agenda item for the joint EWG/Section 75 groups meetings.

• **Outline any factors that enhanced or impeded the process of information provision and ensuring/improving access to services during the period.**

Enhancing Factors

The Department's *Guide to Making Information Accessible* ensures consistency across the Department.

The joint EWG/Section 75 groups meetings provide a valuable forum to identify and address access issues.

The Department is represented on the British/Irish Partnership Group, which is drawing up best practice guidance on the provision of public services through British and Irish sign language.

Section 7: Complaints

- **Identify the number of formal Section 75 complaints received by the authority during the period.**

None.

- **Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were resolved during the period.**

None.

- **Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which are in the process of being resolved.**

None.

- **Identify the number of these Section 75 complaints which were not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant.**

None.

Section 8: Timetable

- **Provide an update of your equality scheme implementation timetable, identifying any changes since your previous report. Please detail planned actions undertaken during the year and planned actions outstanding.**

The Equality Implementation Action Plan is attached as an annex.

A progress report on the EQIA Programme was made to the Commission on 25 February 2004.

There has been some slippage in the EQIA Programme. This is mainly due to slower than expected progress in developing the relevant policies and operational programmes. The Department's Equality Scheme provided for 14 EQIAs to be conducted during 03 / 04. Of these, two policies were shelved, five have been deferred, mainly because of slower than expected progressing developing the relevant policies and operational programmes. Work has begun on another three EQIAs. The public consultation exercise is complete for two draft EQIAs and the Department has rescreened six of its policies and will be seeking permission from the ECNI to remove them from the Scheme.

A quarterly report on progress on all equality scheme commitments continues to be made to the Minister and Departmental Board Members.

Further staff training courses on Equity Awareness, EQIA Methodology and Consultation have been organized.

Work on EQIA monitoring is progressing and meetings have taken place with individual business areas to discuss monitoring the impacts of completed EQIAs.

The Department's *Guide to Making Information Accessible* issued in April 2004.

Internal guidance on consultation procedures has been delayed pending completion of the review of consultation and subsequent guidance from OFMDFM.

Progress on the Good Relations Statutory Duty and equality screening has been delayed pending receipt of new guidance from OFMDFM and the Commission.

Section 9: Consultation, participation and engagement

Provide details of organisational arrangements for managing Section 75 consultation exercises and processes e.g. system, processes, methods and communication channels used.

Consultation lists are regularly reviewed and updated.

The Department encourages agencies and divisions to give prior consideration to the consultation and pre-consultation method(s) most appropriate to each individual consultation exercise, eg face-to-face meetings with targeted groups or individuals representing key stakeholders in the sector, small focus group meetings, etc.

The Department encourages business areas to provide feedback to all consultees who respond to consultation exercises.

The Department has moved towards selective consultation on equality issues. EQIA consultations continue to include representatives of all nine Section 75 groups, with more groups included for areas where impacts have been identified or anticipated. In addition, a letter outlining details of the particular policy or legislation, and setting out where equality impacts have been identified, is sent to each of the Section 75 groups identified in table C1 of the Department's Equality Scheme. This ensures that all of the groups are made aware of the EQIA and can decide whether or not to request a full copy of the consultation document.

The Environmental Policy Group has contacted all its consultees, inviting comments on current consultation methodology. It has recently piloted the fully electronic circulation of a consultation document, and will in due course review the effectiveness of this approach.

Where policies or legislation are screened out for equality impact assessment, the Department recommends that, in addition to the normal list of consultees, consultation documents with the completed screening form attached as an annex should be sent to selected representatives of all nine Section 75 groups. This is an attempt to validate the screening-out and give the Section 75 groups the opportunity to identify any impacts that may inadvertently be overlooked.

The Department's consultation procedures were discussed at the joint Section 75 groups/EWG meeting held in October 2003 and the Section 75 group representatives were generally content with the Department's approach.

EQIA consultations are usually carried out as part of the policy/legislation consultation, and advertisement of consultation documents are published in the press and the documents placed on the Department's website.

A Departmental consultation co-ordinator has been designated, who is responsible for providing details of the Department's consultation documents to OFMDFM for publication on their website.

The Department is represented on the Consultation Advisory Group, facilitated by OFMDFM, to review consultation procedures. Internal consultation guidelines, including such issues as the possibility of regularly publishing the list of policies screened out for EQIA, will be examined once agreement is reached regarding problem areas identified in the review.

All consultation documents and covering letters are required to include the Department's text phone number.

Covering letters and consultation documents state that copies of the document in accessible formats may be requested from the relevant agency or division.

Provide details of processes adopted to participate/engage with affected groups.

In an attempt to help communities to participate in the Development Plan process, the Planning Service engages Community Technical Aid as independent facilitators to consult with the voluntary and community sector in the preparation of Development Plans at various stages in the consultation process. Focus group meetings, open forums and workshops are some of the consultation methods used. Outreach methods have been developed to capture especially marginal groups in local communities, for example young people through school-based consultations.

Taking this approach, capacity has been built within the community and voluntary sector on strategic consultation processes. Equality issues have been integrated into the mainstream consultation process, enabling key issues to be identified more clearly in EQIAs.

Planning Policy Section liaised with Disability Action and the Commission during the process of developing the draft policy guidance document DCAN 11 *Access for All*. The Service is currently liaising with BEAF as it works towards final publication of this document. The working relationship with BEAF has also allowed the Section to discuss policy contained in PPS3 *Access, Movement and Parking* before it is finalized.

For the Practical Driving Test and Vehicle Tests draft EQIA, DVTA contacted 385 organisations, Section 75 groups and individuals to ascertain if they wished to be involved in informal pre-consultation meetings. Meetings were then arranged

with various groups from the Section 75 categories disability, race, gender, sexual orientation and age.

Section 10: The Good Relations duty

Provide details of steps to progress the good relations duty, such as undertaking a good relations audit, developing a strategy or providing training.

All EQIAs carried out address the implications of policies for good relations. The Department awaits final guidance on the Section 75(2) statutory duty from OFMDFM.

Good relations training forms part of the Section 75 awareness training course provided for staff and highlights the need to continue to develop this very important area.

Following conclusion of the consultation on the paper *A Shared Future*, the Department is working with OFMDFM on proposals for a new Good Relations Strategy and how it can contribute to it.

Section 11: Impacts and outcomes

Please provide relevant information about the impact of implementation of Section 75 to end of March 2004. Information provided should be in relation to outputs and outcomes being achieved. Also clarify the outcomes which have impacted on the authority, in terms of efficiency or effectiveness, and outcomes for people in the nine categories.

This could include: details of existing policies changed to better deliver equality of opportunity; incorporation of the EQIA process into policy development; information about impact of new policy (better service provision, alternative service provision, accessibility to services, information gathering on users/non-users of services, satisfaction survey information); information on improved policy/services for the nine categories.

As a matter of course, all new and revised policy or legislation is equality screened by the relevant business area and copied to the Equality Unit. A screening template has been circulated by the Equality Unit to ensure consistency. The Equality Unit and Department's Statistician are available to discuss and advise throughout the screening, EQIA and monitoring process. Consideration is being given to the introduction of a mechanism to facilitate consultation on screening decisions.

Effective pre-consultation methods assist in the formulation of better policy making, eg the greater involvement of Section 75 groups in the Planning Service Community Consultation process has led to Section 75 issues being mainstreamed throughout the Development Plan teams and, as a result, better policies and proposals have emerged. It is, however, not possible at this stage to be definitive about the impacts and outcomes of the process because no plan that has been subject to an EQIA has been through the Public Inquiry and finally adopted.

Section 75 is now an integral part of the policy making process. This is due to the mainstreaming of Section 75 throughout the Department and the good working relationships developed with the Section 75 groups.

A clear impact of understanding the need to effectively engage with Section 75 Groups is the decision by DVLNI to establish a working group, the membership of which will include Disability Action. This Group will be tasked with ensuring that DVLNI routinely considers the equality implications of all its policies and procedures across all Section 75 categories.

This decision was partly taken following the secondment to Disability Action for a three-month period of a member of staff from DVLNI who returned to the Agency with a better understanding of the role played by Disability Action and other Section 75 Groups.

Section 12: Additional comments on Mainstreaming

The main aim of the statutory duties is to help to mainstream equality of opportunity and good relations considerations into the functions of the authority, leading to better policies and service delivery.

Whilst many of the questions in the previous Sections of this template relate to actions on mainstreaming of Section 75 duties we would be grateful if you could provide any additional information/comment which you think may be relevant to your report. You may wish to report here on your view of the:

- **extent of mainstreaming of the duties within the authority**
- **benefits for the authority resulting from mainstreaming**
- **factors which have impeded mainstreaming**
- **plans for future effective mainstreaming of the duties.**

Implementation of the Section 75 statutory duty has greatly benefited the Department in carrying out its functions and is an integral part of policy formulation.

The Department is committed to ensuring that Section 75 duties are mainstreamed throughout all business areas. They have now become an intrinsic part of the policy development process for staff.

The Department has developed its consultation processes, however they will be revisited again once the consultation review is complete.

The Department looks forward to the revised Guide to the Statutory Duties and EQIA Practical Guidance being prepared by the Commission.

Section 13: Concluding questions

This short questionnaire is included in the template to enable you to, provide an overall view of the effectiveness of the statutory duties, for your authority and for the Section 75 categories.

QUESTION A

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for the organisation? (Please tick) YES _____

If you answered yes to QUESTION A, please tick appropriate boxes below to what extent the duties have:

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Increased awareness of equality issues in policy making	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect equal opportunities objectives	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Increased awareness of good relations issues in policy making		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Increased ability to ensure policies are designed and targeted to reflect good relations objectives		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Increased awareness of equality issues in service delivery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Increased ability to ensure services are designed and targeted to reflect Section 75 requirements	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

QUESTION B

Does the authority believe its work to date on implementing the statutory duties has produced positive benefits for groups within the Section 75 categories? (Please tick) **YES_√**

If you answered yes to **QUESTION B**, please tick appropriate boxes below on what extent the authority's implementation of the statutory duties has increased equality of opportunity for

	Very noticeably	Noticeably	No real change
Persons of different religious belief			√
Persons of different political opinion			√
Persons of different racial groups		√	
Persons of different age			√
Persons with different marital status			√
Persons of different sexual orientation			√
Men and women generally			√
Persons with and without a disability		√	
Persons with and without dependents			√